

THE
POET:

A
POEM.



BY
EDWARD DIGBY,
FORMERLY OF MAGDALEN COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

*" Oh, ye who (blest with wealth and power)
" From indigence call Merit forth,
" Who kindly shed the fav'ring shower
" That rears it to its proper growth,
" Where is the joy that Wealth bestows,
" Where is the bliss can Wealth impart,
" To equal your's, who soften woes,
" Extract the dagger from the Heart."*

Vide Page 19.

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PREFACE.

LITTLE did the author of the following Poem think, at the time he was writing it, that *he* should so soon feel the Horror of a Prison, and *experience himself* that hapless fate which he has feebly attempted to depicture. His peculiarly hard fate may serve as a strong proof, an awful memento, of the instability and uncertainty of human felicity ; for at the moment when he was happy in his peaceful abode, tasting the sweets of domestic happiness, he was torn from his home to experience miseries, at the bare mention of which Sensibility must shrink back with horror ; miseries which *no worldly compensation can ever recompence him for having endured*, and which will never be erased from his mind until the hand of Death deprives him of existence.

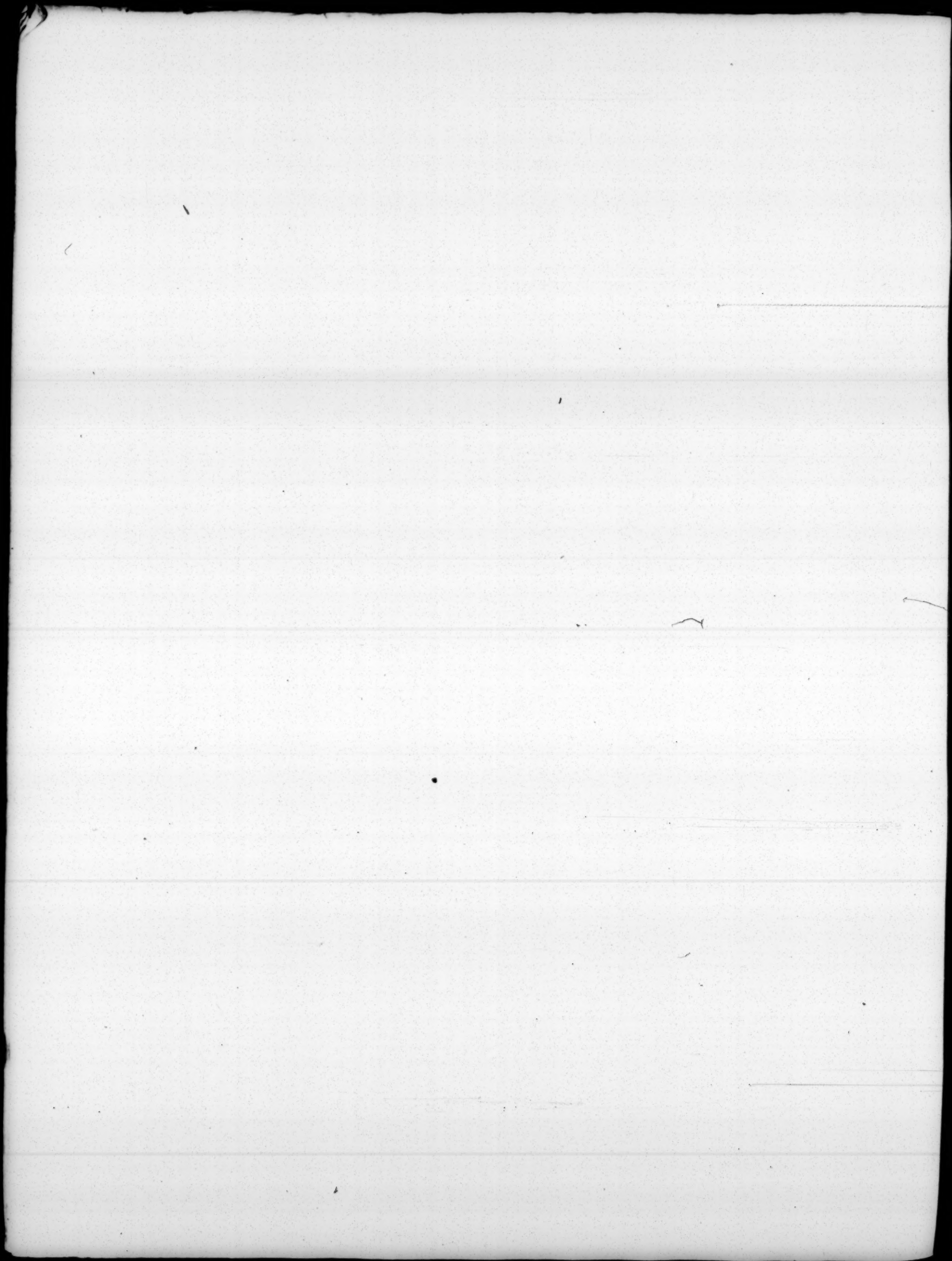
PREFACE.

The Public are already in some degree acquainted with the sufferings he has undergone*, and with the result of a late trial at the Old Bailey, which excited no inconsiderable degree of public curiosity. Though highly gratified by the encomiums bestowed on this trifling production, the author meant to have corrected errors which the eye of criticism will readily discern; but the *distracted state of mind* under which he now labours from a *succession* of miseries as *unexpected* as (he flatters himself) they were *unmerited*, compels him to submit it to public inspection in its present homely dress.

* See the trial of the Medical Gentleman, (tried Nov. 4th, under the name of JOHN JONES) on the supposition of being guilty of a highway robbery on the 11th of October, near Hampstead. When brought up at Bow Street, (conscious of his innocence, he solicited permission to take some other name than his own, which permission was humanely granted him.

PREFACE.

He will not attempt to awaken public compassion by a recital of *what* he has undergone! Sensibility will readily feel with him the complicated horrors arising from *imprisonment on the felons' side of Newgate*; fetters; the being exposed as a public but a shocking spectacle for identity at Bow-street; *loss of property without any means of redress*; and from his being likely to remain in the King's Bench for a debt which he is unable to discharge, merely from the *very heavy* expences attendant on the trial at that awful bar where *he was so honorably acquitted*.



THE
POET.

WHILE shiv'ring o'er his midnight lamp
 Regardless of nocturnal rest,
The Poet breathes the baneful damp,
 And friendless strikes his tortur'd breast.

He traces back those days of yore,
 When GENIUS had not fled our isle,
When opening all her mental store
 Some rich MÆCENAS deign'd to smile.

Some PATRON whose protecting hand,
 Would a kind recompence bestow,
Whose liberal mind could e'er expand,
 And bid the opening bud to blow!

Who would a bliss supreme impart,
Who deign'd to stop the rising sigh,
Who sooth'd the anguish of the heart,
By wiping tears from MERIT's eye.

Happy he cried those distant days,
When Learning found its sterling worth,
When POESY could earn her bays,
And was not blighted in her birth.

Thrice blest that time when midnight toil,
And classic labours were not spurn'd ;
When (like the tiller of the foil)
Each reap'd the honors it had earn'd !

Happy the time and blest the age,
Age that I fear will ne'er return !
When that the MERIT of each page,
ALONE would rear its future urn.

When POESY, celestial maid!

Tho' courted in an earlier age,
And tho' bred up in rural shade,
Taught her superiors in each page.

Then neither toil or midnight damp
The bard could injure, or affright,
For PATRONAGE then trimm'd the Lamp,
And made it burn divinely bright.

But, oh, how chang'd the once-lov'd scene,
How throbs sweet maid thy aching breast,
Transform'd, alas! thy beauteous mien!
In dimpling smiles no longer drest.

The heart that ONCE was ope to give
The just reward to Merit due!
That wish'd for GENIUS to LIVE,
And patronis'd the worthy Few,

Alas, is steel'd, its taste deprav'd,
Its views corrupt, its actions more,
Its very happiness enslav'd
And shipwreck'd on its wish'd-for shore !

For where can happiness be fought,
When the heart feel sincere delight ?
Or how can Pleasure e'er be bought,
If Innocence is out of fight ?

Oh, ALBION, once thy sea-girt shores
Encircled souls alive to joy,
Souls that preferr'd sweet Learning's stores
To pleasures which alone destroy.

The midnight orgies of the age,
That mock the lustre of the sun,
Agree not with the classic page,
Or own the honors it has won.

For POESY attunes her lyre,
To soothe the sorrows of the heart,
Calls forth her energetic fire,
Far other pleasures to impart.

Chaste as the dew-drop on the thorn,
That modest woo's the verdant ground,
When first the finger of the Morn
Scatters her orient pearl around.

Th' affrighted maid forbids to sing
The pleasures of a venal throng,
Whose joys entail a deadly sting,
Whose views are uniformly wrong.

Oh, that her voice could sound alarms!
Could rouse the SONS of ALBION's land,
Instant to rise and take up arms,
'Gainst Luxury's destructive band.

That Goddess, by whose magic smiles
Nations and Empires oft are won,
That Goddess, by whose treach'rous wiles
Nations and Empires are undone.

Oh, age, absorb'd in every vice
That human science can invent,
Age that has banish'd from our isle,
The tranquil pleasure of content.

GOLDSMITH, thy true prophetic pen
Has long foretold the dismal change,
When men, neglecting fellow men,
In Pleasure's path destructive range.

When Vice, with her triumphant train,
Regardless of her votaries peace,
Spreads ruin o'er a wide domain,
When all its miseries encrease ;

When all the produce of a land
 (Once fam'd for Plenty's ample store)
Is not sufficient for the hand
 That rudely grasps and wishes more ;

When the ear pierc'd with dire alarms,
 The earth enrich'd with human blood,
When man 'gainst man is up in arms,
 When Pity's voice can be withstood ;

When Luxury has ope'd her box,
 And like Pandora spreads her ills,
Shipwrecks her votaries on rocks,
 Her favourites relentless kills ;

When scenes like these enslave the mind,
 Weaken the Sons of Albion's land,
Too soon, alas! will Albion find

HER DESOLATION IS AT HAND.

The Muse shrinks back (with grief impress'd)
To view such scenes, (scenes that displease!)
When Vice by Opulence caress'd,
Is nurtur'd in the lap of Ease.

She traces back to memory dear,
The time when smiling Plenty's hand
Gave to the PEASANT (as the Peer)
The EQUAL produce of her land.

When home returning from his toil,
His hearth surrounded with delight,
He reap'd the produce of the soil,
Content his opiate at night.

Around the spot where once he dwelt,
Dwelt roseate Health and tranquil Ease,
Where e'en the Great their Influence felt,
And own'd their suasive power to please.

Oh, envied time, when e'en the Great
 Would deign to share the Peasant's joys,
 And, bending from their lofty state,
 Taste happiness that never cloy;

When far remote from City's strife,
 Sequester'd in the peaceful dale,
 They led an innocent and USEFUL life,
 And own'd the pleasures of the vale;

When Luxury (unknown to man)
 Had not usurp'd tyrannic power,
 And banish'd ev'ry social plan,
 That footh'd the Rustic's vacant hour;

When both uniting, (happy isle!)
 To add to comfort and to health,
 The Peasant freely lent his toil,
 The Rich a portion of his wealth!

But, oh, how chang'd the poor man's lot!
How much transform'd his happy fate!
The little garden round his cot
E'en GRASP'D to swell the rich man's state?

No Patron now, if sickness calls,
To aid, administer relief;
No soothing voice within his walls
To lessen or remove his grief!

E'en he who, during ev'ry hour,
From dawning reason to the grave,
Expended wealth, exerted power,
To bless---to patronise, and save!

Whose soul, possess'd of ev'ry worth,
Strove to restrain Corruption's rage,
(A man less noble by his birth
Than as the patriot of the age)

Is gone ! has left Britannia's land,
 Left her to mourn her hapless fate ;
 In losing him whose gen'rous hand
 WAS STRETCH'D TO SAVE A FALLING STATE !

Not to a partial FEW confin'd
 His care ; the Peasant or the Throne !
 His heart, capacious as his mind,
 Claim'd EVR'Y child of woe his own.

Oh, could a grateful nation's groans
 Recall to life departed breath,
 Could public tears, or private moans,
 Have stopt the iron hand of Death,

BEDFORD (to honor, virtue just,
 To ev'ry noble action free)
 Had still fulfill'd the sacred trust
 OF LOVING MAN AS MAN LOV'D THEE ;

Had still the foremost champion prov'd,
In Liberty's delightful cause,
(For he who once his country lov'd
Can never VIOLATE her laws)

Had still each arduous effort wrought,
To stem Corruption's baneful tide,
In Freedom's cause had nobly fought,
Had fought, had conquer'd, or had dy'd !

But when arriv'd the luckless hour
That Virtue, Worth, were wanted most ;
Relentless Death evinc'd his power,
And tore him from his glorious post.

Retract the word ! he is not dead,
Death has no power o'er souls like his,
From its corporeal mansion fled,
His soul is only flown to bliss !

This poor, but grateful, tribute paid
 To great! alas, departed worth!
 Rest thou, for ever, peaceful shade,
 Enthron'd in heav'n, tho' tomb'd in earth.

Let me recall the glorious time,
 When Britons knew no other wealth
 But the production of their clime,
 *Combin'd with Innocence and Health.

The first was deem'd sufficient store
 Fully to satisfy desire;
 Each want supplied, they wish'd not more,
 Food, Raiment, Beverage, and Fire;

Whilst Innocence (man's greatest wealth)
 Prevented War, Contention, Strife!
 And, aided by the glow of HEALTH,
 Gave double happiness to life.

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* See GOLDSMITH's Poem of the Deserted Village.

These gifts bestow'd, What else can man
Expect, or wish, or e'en desire ?
These granted to his earthly span
Should fully feed Ambition's fire !

All else beyond is futile ! vain !
And only saps both health and ease ;
For once the mind allur'd to gain,
Implants the seeds of long disease.

'Tis not the riches of the Great
That give the tortur'd bosom ease ;
'Tis not the pageantry of State
That long can claim the power to please,

He who, inform'd in Learning's schools,
Has largely tasted Wisdom's store,
Will leave the right of these to fools,
Who when possessing still want more.

Couldst thou select amongst the throng,
That nightly flock to Pleasure's call,
That haste to hear the mirthful song,
Or numerous swell the midnight ball ;

Couldst thou select the HAPPIEST there,
And analyze the human heart,
Thou'lt find, no doubt, amidst the Fair,
That each of sorrow has her part.

The mansions of the Great behold,
Where Splendor, Luxury, and Pride,
Where odious flattery (bought with gold)
And tinsel'd happiness reside !

Where Art and Nature, both combin'd,
Cannot support Ambition's fire,
Where Sloth, on beds of down reclin'd,
Only creates each new desire !

The banquet's luscious charms survey,
That boast the produce of each clime,
Where num'rous ills in ambush lay,
And shorten half the rich man's time !

Not half the bliss these votaries feel,
Who revel through the peaceful night,
Which waits upon the Peasant's meal,
A meal surrounded with delight !

What tho' no dainties heap his board,
No costly viands feast his eye,
What tho' his pittance won't afford
Luxurious dishes, feasted high,

His simple meal, (procur'd by toil)
Bought by hard labour, not by wealth ;
The produce of his native soil
Suffices, and ensures him HEALTH :

Health, the first gift that heav'n bestows,
 The richest cordial, sweetest balm,
 The source from which each comfort flows,
 That e'en can Penury disarm !

What tho' no foreign clime is fought,
 To please the appetite enslav'd,
 No stimulating spices bought
 To raise that appetite deprav'd,

Hunger, the consequence of toil,
 Sweetens his meal ; oh, envied fate !
 Known to the Tiller of the soil
 More than the man who groans in state ;

He, rack'd with gout, can only view
 The dainties which he can't enjoy,
 And hourly feels the maxim true
 That Luxuries will soonest cloy.

Yet Wealth, if rightly understood
Its PROPER use ; its sterling worth ;
May teem with universal good,
May add Nobility to Birth ;

Give blessings to a vast domain,
May peace, and health, and joy impart,
Give pleasure to a num'rous train,
And soothe each anguish of the heart.

When Merit, in obscure retreat,
Lies veil'd for want of fostering Aid ;
And, thrown upon her mossy seat,
Neglected sighs in rural shade !

Unable to call forth her powers
(Great in themselves, but fetter'd fast)
For want of Sunshine's fav'ring showers,
Or nipp'd by Penury's chilling blast,

(Not far unlike the bashful rose,
When first its tints salute the skies,
Which wither'd, oft before it blows,
For want of due protection dies.)

So Merit, fled in its dawn,
And unsupported at its birth,
Oft droops her head in early morn,
And sinks, unheeded, into earth.

Oh, ye who (blest with wealth and power)
From indigence call Merit forth,
Who kindly shed the fav'ring show'r
That rears it to its proper growth,

Where is the joy that Wealth bestows,
Where is the bliss can Wealth impart,
To equal your's, who soften woes,
Extract the dagger from the HEART.

This is a bliss of few the lot,
Of none who join in Folly's train,
Who spurn, indignant, Merit's cot,
And centre ev'ry wish in gain ;

Whose souls to ev'ry feeling dead
That dignifies the human name
By hopes of LUCRE only led,
Acquire nor happiness nor fame ;

Who, not content with ample store,
With hopes of GREATER fortune fir'd,
Infatiate, grasping after more,
Lose what their CAUTION had acquir'd.

Let not then Avarice taint thy mind,
A wish for wealth thy peace molest,
The veil withdrawn, thou'lt often find
A canker in their owner's breast.

“ But, ere we close the subject---Wealth---

“ Or shew what good may spring from pow’r,

“ The blessing of restoring health,

“ Or soft’ning Sorrow’s bitter hour,

“ Of raising Merit’s drooping head,

“ Encouraging neglected worth,

“ Dispelling ev’ry cloud that’s spread

“ By mere humility of birth,”

The muse must other sorrows sing,

Again must strike her mournful lyre,

Again must vibrate every string,

Must rouse each particle of fire.

The sword now sheath’d, and dove-ey’d Peace

Expanding wide her balmy wings,

May UNIVERSAL Joy encrease

To hail the tidings which she brings.

Let not the Sons of Albion's land
Partial enjoy the boon bestow'd,
May Regal Mercy stretch her hand,
And ease the CAPTIVE's weary load;

Oh, may the DEBTOR, clos'd in walls,
Denied the breath of vital air,
(Where Mis'ry oft for Mercy calls,
But calls in vain! denied her pray'r!)

May he, releas'd from durance vile,
Again with former freedom roam,
Share round his hearth the long-lost smile,
Since captur'd from his peaceful home.

HOWARD, thou friend of human kind,
Whose virtues Time can ne'er efface;
(Oh, where thy fellow shall we find
Amidst our present fallen race!)

Thou who, despising rank and birth,
Neglected ease, retirement, wealth,
Explor'd the dungeons of the earth,
Regardless both of life and health,

Thou, who could'st brave the prison's gloom,
Could'st stalk amidst the ranks of Death,
Could'st visit e'en the living tomb,
Inhale the pestilential breath ;*

Could'st e'en the felon's fate amend,
Nor think the task below thy care
The cause of mis'ry to befriend,
To give him health, afford him air,

* This great and good man (whose character is so universally known) unfortunately for society, fell a martyr to the plague, and at a time when he was endeavouring to discover some plan to stop its too-fatal progress.—His monument is erected in Saint Paul's Cathedral.

Look down (if possible) and aid the cause,
The cause most near each feeling heart !
(Oh, that in framing milder laws
That thou COULD'ST bear an ample part !)

England might hope again to see
Laws in themselves more just, more pure,
Laws that would keep the SUBJECT FREE,
AND WORK OUR CONSTITUTION'S CURE !

Feeble, alas, my humble lay,
Tho' strong my wish, my power too faint ;
Alas, my pen, unable to pourtray
The picture which I wish to paint !

If gen'rous sympathy, if modest worth,
If an whole life in good employ'd,
If acts of charity from earliest birth,
Till Death approach'd, till HOWARD died,

If these can rear thy statue high,
Immortalize thy spotless name,
HOWARD, thy virtues ne'er can die,
Nor Time e'er rust thy well-earn'd fame.

But whilst the Muse thy Virtues sings,
Let not her pen his praise neglect,
(Whilst GRATITUDE to mem'ry brings)
The Man who Freedom could protect.

MOIRA ! accept the ardent pray'r
Of those who late immers'd in woe,
By thy unceasing gen'rous care
The precious gift of Freedom know.

Long may thy life yet bless the land,
Thy great example rouse the State,
To weigh the important cause in hand,
And sooth the Debtor's hapless fate.

Can Britons boast of MILDEST Laws,
Laws form'd were taught to MEND the heart?
Can Britons DIE in Freedom's cause,
And yet from Liberty DEPART?

Can Albion's Sons of rank and birth,
Whom Honor bids this gem protect;
Can these, regardless of its worth,
Its preservation so NEGLECT?

Can view a fellow-man confin'd
Whole years for debt in prison's walls?
SUCH laws must shock each feeling mind,
AND LOUD FOR REFORMATION CALLS!

What's he whose nest, tho' form'd with care,
Tho' built aloft, and tow'ring high,
Tho' proudly wantoning in air,
That can MISFORTUNE's storms defy!

The fraud of Friendship (deem'd most pure!)
 The mere Inconstancy of wind
 May sink the bark that's deem'd secure,
 Nor leave a single wreck behind!

And will the Sons of Albion's isle
 Rapacious seize their fellow-men?
 When Fortune has withdrawn her smile
 Convey them to the Felon's DEN? *

Add to the Debtor's hapless fate,
 And ev'ry Pow'r to pay defeat?
 Immure within his iron gate,
 And make his misery complete?

* Though the Debtor is not actually confined in the same apartments with the Felon, yet, in many gaols, his fate is little better; for he can neither avoid seeing the scenes of infamy which take place within the walls of a prison, nor his ears escape both the oaths, immodest and blasphemous language, which render imprisonment doubly horrible.

Tear from his hands each MEANS that's left
 To rise superior to grief?
 Of Liberty at once bereft,
 And treated as the hard'ned thief?

The thief, when first immur'd in walls,
 Has not the Debtor's fate to dread,
 The law provides for Nature's calls,
 At least provides HIS meal of bread.

But the poor Debtor (dreadful thought!)
 Is left to starve (keen Hunger's prey!)
 Not e'en allow'd his trifling groat,
 But subject to the Law's delay! *

* It may be necessary to inform those who are unacquainted with the Laws of England, that the Debtor's treatment on his *first* imprisonment is, in some respects, far more dreadful than that of the Felon—or even the Murderer—as BOTH THESE are allowed, by *law*, sufficient sustenance to support nature; but the hapless Debtor, torn from his home—abandoned by his friends—his prospects ruined—and (perhaps confined for a debt which he does not owe) is literally left to PERISH WITH HUNGER! as he cannot receive his daily groat (now encreased to sixpence) till certain proceedings in law are gone through, which require *several* months.

My God! is it POSSIBLE that laws
 So dire, tremend'ous, and severe,
 Laws that defeat the justest cause,
 In this our boasted isle appear?

The Muse must drop her wearied pen,
 (Wearied, indeed, with such a theme)
 Must hope that those who FEEL, AS MEN,
 Will rouse from their lethargic dream;

Will join with MOIRA in the cause,
 The cause of Mis'ry to befriend,
 Will strive to meliorate our laws,
 And Albion's LIBERTY defend!

months. The Author was much affected, in visiting the gaol of Hertford, by observing, on entering the Debtors' yard, the following words painted upon the wall, in large capitals—

“ NO ALLOWANCE IN *THIS* PRISON.”

The Muse, on scenes of sorrow bent,
Might prove that Prison's gloomy walls
RARELY produce the wish'd event,
Or satisfy the Plaintiff's calls.

Why then immure, for length'ned years,
The man who freely offers ALL?
Why cruelly augment his tears
And doubly aggravate his Fall?

Oh, Scotia!* THY Sons of Power
More mercy shew their fellow-men,
By nobly short'ning Mis'ry's hour,
By giving LIBERTY again.

* In Scotland the law, after a very short confinement, humanely COMPELS the Creditors to accept the Debtor's property, and to liberate him from prison.

May England's Sons join hand in hand,
With Mercy judge the Debtor's fate!
Wipe off this Stigma to our Land,
This Stigma to our Church and State!

*Ill-fated man! thy pen has prov'd
How far the laws reform the mind!
Thy Muse, with tender pity mov'd!
Has fung the woes of those confin'd!

But, hark! what founds now strike the ear!
What shouts of mirth ascend on high!
See the vast train approaching near,
Proclaim that Liberty is nigh!

* See Dr. DODD's most pathetic and highly-beautiful work,
"THOUGHTS IN PRISON."

Behold its Star effulgent rise,
And dart its beams o'er Albion's land!
Oh, may it SET in Albion's skies,
And long, long bless her Patriot Band!

Oh, may its lustre too extend
Beyond our isle to Afric's shore,
The sun-burnt negro soon befriend,
And Truth to MUSSULMEN EXPLORE!

This day an arduous contest gain'd,
"The Sons of Freedom gain'd their choice!"*
No longer may our land be stain'd
By Laws that drown Affliction's voice!

* Alluding to the event of the *Middlesex* Election.

May a Reform throughout our isle,
 Reform* long wanted! now appear!
 Spread o'er the land its long-lost smile,
 Disperse Britannia's falling tear!

May the destructive Cannon's roar
 O'er all the earth for ever cease,
 (Except to tell each distant shore
 That, happ'ly, all the world's at Peace!)

The sword (now sheath'd) neglected lie!
 Within its mould'ring scabbard rust!
 Nor man (by man unfeeling) die
 To gratify Ambition's lust.

* It is to be *hoped* that a new Parliament will *endear* itself to its Electors, by bringing about such a Reform as will promote the REAL happiness of the Nation at large, by amending such laws as are inconsistent with a free government—by setting an *Example*, and thereby more effectually endeavouring to destroy the baneful effects of Luxury and Licentiousness; and, lastly, by *cutting at the Root of that System of Monopoly which, if continued, must, and most assuredly will, PROVE THE DOWNFALL OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE!*

Vain is the hope our rural sports
Can give their wonted tranquil ease,
Till Luxury is banish'd Courts,
And loses ev'ry power to please!

Why state that our productive soil
Gives double what it gave before?
And that the Peasant's daily toil,
If well directed, will give more?

Does Peace bring Plenty in her hand?
Reward the Peasant's daily toil?
Has the curs'd Hydra * left the land
That WASTES the PRODUCE of our SOIL?

That Hydra, whose destructive grasp
Turns ev'ry blessing to a curse,
(More venom'd than the poison'd asp!)
And only fills the VILLAIN's purse!

* MONOPOLY.

No longer may it rear its head,
 And, foster'd by Britannia's law,
 Be nurtur'd in its secret bed,
 And glut its avaricious maw !

Ye Sons of Opulence and Power
 Eradicate the loathsome plant !
 Nor let its seeds, in FUTURE HOUR,
 Bring Murmurs, Misery, and Want.

More cheerful, then, the rustic train
 Will turn for you the stubborn soil !
 Well satisfied the lab'ring swain
 To share the produce of his toil.

These changes wrought in Albion's land
 Where is the soil can boast her Wealth !
 Each REAL Comfort at command !
 Peace ! Liberty ! and Health !

Science again may rear her head !

The Arts encrease ! and Learning thrive !
 Nay, rising from her sickly Bed
 E'en Poefy may yet survive !

Transporting thought ! the Mufe SHALL live
 Again fhall chaunt her modeft lays !
 And PATRONAGE again fhall give

SUPPORT, ENCOURAGEMENT, AND PRAISE !

FINIS.

